

REMARKS

Reconsideration and withdrawal of all grounds of rejection are respectfully requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks. Claims 1-12 and 15-21 were rejected. By entry of this Amendment, claims 1, 5-12 and 15-21 are amended. No claims are cancelled and no new claims are added. Consequently, claims 1-12 and 15-21 are pending.

Claim 5 has been amended to better define the invention. As amended, claim 5 recites an adjustable coupler lock assembly including a coupler, a lock body, a locking mechanism disposed within said lock body, and a shaft for securing the lock body to said coupler, wherein said shaft is movable in one of two insertion directions relative to said lock body but not in an opposing withdrawal direction when the coupler lock is in a locked position.

The Examiner has reject claim 5 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent No. 1,495,115 to Setterberg. However, Setterberg does not teach or suggest all limitations of claim 5. For example, Setterberg does not teach or suggest a shaft movable in one of two opposing insertion directions relative to the lock body. As seen in Figure 2 of Setterberg, the shaft 6 that can only move left to right relative to the lock body 2 when being inserted. The cross-sectional view in Figure 4 clearly does not show an insertion hole on the right side of the body 2 for insertion in the right to left direction. Consequently, Setterberg does not anticipate claim 5. As such, claim 5 is patentable over Setterberg and is in condition for allowance. Claims 6-12 and 15-16 are also patentable at least based on direct or indirect dependence on claim 6, and are in condition for allowance.

Claim 1 has been amended to better define the invention. As amended, claim 1 is directed to an adjustable coupler lock including a lock body and a shaft. The shaft is movable relative a lock body in a first direction insertion or an opposing second insertion direction through a passage in the lock body with the coupler latch in a locked position. This feature of the invention is illustrated in Figures 5 and 6. For exemplary purposes only, the lock body 20 is on the left of the latch 100. Consequently, the shaft 30 has been inserted right to left. To do so, an operator holds the shaft 30 flange end 92 in his right hand and inserts it through a hole in the

latch 100. Next, the operator inserts the shaft through the lock body 20. The lock body 20 is then moved toward the latch 100. As the lock body 20 proceeds toward the latch 100, the locking plate 70 engages notches on the shaft until the lock body cannot move any further toward the latch 100. This technique is described in para. 0025 of the application.

In this invention, the shaft can be inserted in either direction with respect to the object upon which the lock is fixed. In other words, the lock 10 can also be installed with the lock body 20 on the right of the latch and the shaft 30 inserted left to right. In this case, the operator holds the shaft with his left hand and the lock body with his right hand and repeats the above-described assembly steps.

The locked position of a coupler latch is also illustrated in Figures 5 and 6 with the latch rotated down or closed. Further, this position is clearly described in the specification. (para. [0025], lines 10-16).

“The latch device **100** is preferably in the closed position, meaning, in the case of a trailer hitch, that the trailer cannot be disconnected from the vehicle without moving the latch to the open position. After insertion of the shaft **30** into and through the opening in the latch **100**, the lock body **20** is attached to the shaft **30**.”

In contrast, the “unlocked position” allows for “an inserted shaft to be removed from the lock body 20.” (para 0022, last 2 lines).

The Examiner has rejected claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent No. 1,592,696 to Heyer and by US Patent No. 4,003,227 to Casey. However, neither Heyer nor Casey teach or suggest every limitation of claim 1. For example, neither Heyer nor Casey teach or suggest a lock device wherein the shaft can be inserted in either of two opposing directions relative the lock body. The insertion direction in Heyer, i.e., top to bottom, shown in Figure 1 is the only direction possible. As seen in Figures 3 and 4 of Heyer, the structure of the tumblers 4 and tapered portion 19 prevent insertion from bottom to top when the tumblers are in a locked position, i.e., not in an unlocked position in which a proper key is inserted into a key slot and the shaft can be removed. Consequently, Heyer does not anticipate claim 1. In regard to Casey, the insertion direction of either shaft 24, 26 is structurally limited by handles 18, 19 to be in only one direction relative the lock body 27. Consequently, Heyer and Casey do not anticipate claim 1. As such, claim 1 is patentable over Heyer and Casey and is in condition for allowance.

Claims 2-4 are also patentable at least based on direct or indirect dependence on claim 1, and are in condition for allowance.

Claim 17 has been amended to better define the invention. As amended, claim 17 is directed to an adjustable coupler lock including a lock body defining a passage therethrough and a locking mechanism, a shaft with two or more recesses, and a locking plate which engages one of said two or more recesses when said coupler lock is in a locked position, wherein said shaft can be inserted through said passage and said locking plate in two opposing directions relative to said lock body.

The Examiner has rejected claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent No. 1,592,696 to Heyer. However, Heyer does not teach or suggest every limitation of claim 1. For example and as stated above in regard to claim 1, Heyer does not teach or suggest a lock device wherein the shaft can be inserted in two opposing directions relative the lock body. Consequently, Heyer does not anticipate claim 17. As such, claim 17 is patentable over the cited references and is in condition for allowance.

Claim 18 has been amended to better define the invention. Claim 18 is directed an adjustable length lock assembly for securing a coupler having a coupler latch to a hitch ball. The assembly includes a coupler, a hitch ball, a lock body and shaft. The shaft is insertable sequentially through the coupler latch and lock body opening from either of two opposing insertion directions with respect to the lock body, with the coupler latch in a closed position and the coupler in contact with the hitch ball. Such engagement of the locking plate with one of the shaft recesses does not allow movement of the shaft through the lock body in an opposing withdrawal direction relative to the insertion direction unless the locking mechanism is unlocked.

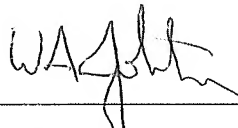
The Examiner has rejected claim 18 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent No. 4,003,227 to Casey. However, Casey does not teach or suggest every limitation of claim 18. For example, Casey does teach or suggest an assembly having a coupler, hitch ball and shaft, wherein the shaft can be inserted in two opposing directions relative the lock body. Consequently, Casey does not anticipate claim 18. As such, claim 18 is patentable over Casey and is in condition for allowance. Claims 18-21 are also patentable at least based on direct or

indirect dependence on claim 18, and are in condition for allowance.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all pending claims of this application are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, a Notice of Allowance for all pending claims of this application is respectfully solicited. Furthermore, if the Examiner believes that additional discussions or information might advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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